

EASTER 2021
Excerpt from Benedict XVI's - 7 April 2012
by Father Charles Fillion
04 April 2021

Brothers and sisters, Easter is the feast of the new creation. Jesus is risen and dies no more. He has opened the door to a new life, one that no longer knows illness and death. He has taken humankind up into God himself. On the subject of Christ's resurrection and our resurrection, the Church writer Tertullian in the third century was bold enough to write: "Rest assured, flesh and blood, through Christ you have gained your place in heaven and in the Kingdom of God" (*CCL II*, 994). A new dimension has opened up for humankind. Creation has become greater and broader. Easter Day ushers in a new creation, but that is precisely why the Church starts the liturgy on this day with the old creation, so that we can learn to understand the new one properly. And so, I'm making a reference of the first reading on Easter night, the account of the creation of the world.

Two things are particularly important here. On the one hand, creation is presented as a whole that includes the phenomenon of time. The seven days are an image of completeness, unfolding in time. They are ordered towards the seventh day, the day of the freedom of all creatures for God and for one another. Creation is therefore directed towards the coming together or the communion of God and his creatures; it exists so as to open up a space for the response to God's great glory, an encounter between love and freedom.

On the other hand, what the Church hears on Easter night is above all the first element of the creation account: "God said, 'let there be light!'" (*Gen 1:3*). The creation account begins symbolically with the creation of light. Light makes life possible. It makes encounter possible. It makes communication possible. It makes knowledge, access to reality and to truth, possible.

Evil hides.

Light, then, is also an expression of what is good. It is daylight, which makes it possible for us to act. To say that God created light means that God created the world as a space for knowledge and truth, as a space for encounter and freedom, as a space for good and for love. Matter is fundamentally good, being itself is good. And evil does not come from God-made being, rather, it comes into existence only through denial. It is a "no".

At Easter, on the morning of the first day of the week, God said once again: "Let there be light". Before that, there had been the night on the Mount of Olives, the Jesus' passion and death, the night of the tomb. Now it is the first day once again – creation is beginning anew. "Let there be light", says God, "and there was light": Jesus rises from the grave.

Life is stronger than death. Good is stronger than evil. Love is stronger than hate. Truth is stronger than lies. With the resurrection of Jesus, light itself is created anew. He draws all of us after him into the new light of the resurrection and he conquers all darkness.

I would like to add one more thought about light. The Church presents the mystery of light using a unique and very humble symbol: The Paschal candle. This is a light that lives from sacrifice. The candle shines by burning itself. It gives light, inasmuch as it gives itself. So, the Church presents most beautifully the paschal mystery of Christ, who gives himself and so bestows the great light.

Secondly, we should remember that the light of the candle is a fire. Fire is the power that shapes the world, the force of transformation. And fire gives heat. Here too the mystery of Christ is made newly visible. Christ, the light, is fire, the flame burning up evil and so reshaping both the world and ourselves. And this fire is both heat and light: not a cold light, but one through which God's warmth and goodness reach down to us.

The great hymn of the *Exsultet* at the beginning of the Easter liturgy, reminds us that this object, the candle, has its origin in the work of bees. Therefore, the whole of creation plays its part. In the candle, creation becomes a bearer of light. But, the candle also in some sense contains a silent reference to the Church. The cooperation of the living community of believers in the Church in some way resembles the activity of bees. It builds up the community of light. So the candle serves as a reminder to us to become involved in the community of the Church, whose *raison d'être* is to let the light of Christ shine upon the world.

Let us pray to the Lord at this time that he may grant us to experience the joy of his light; let us pray that we ourselves may become bearers of his light, and that through the Church, Christ's radiant face may enter our world (cf. *LG* 1). Amen.